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Saigon, Vietnam

A-2354

6 March 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Ambassador

FROM :

SUBJECT : Impact of Friendly Operations on VC Guerrillas and Infrastructure

I am sending you this memorandum in response to a request which you made at the 27 February Mission Council meeting. It is a summation of certain material which leads me to feel that the overall U.S. effort is having a much greater impact on the overall capabilities of the Viet Cong, including the guerrilla effort, than is commonly realized.

Unfortunately, there seems to be an impression in many quarters that we are winning the orthodox war but failing in "the other war," as if the two aspects of the conflict were somehow wholly separate and unconnected. On the contrary, they are of course intimately interdependent, and our mounting successes in the orthodox phase of the war have profoundly affected the VC guerrilla apparatus and political infrastructure. A striking illustration of this is revealed in a recently captured letter written by a VC Binh Dinh Province Cadre to his superior on 20 January 1967. It says that, since the ARVN-ROK-US sweeps through Phu Cat and Phu My Districts in September and early October last year, both the military and political structures in these Districts have been in critical condition. It ends with an expression of hope for a future revival of VC influence in the area.

The demands of main-force units for an increasing flow of supply and manpower replacements has strained the infrastructure severely, frequently beyond its capacity. Food and manpower are inadequate in many areas and, according to recently captured documents, guerrilla forces are shrinking. Morale is contagious, and the spirit of the political and support forces is suffering along with that of the battered main-force troops.

cc: The Deputy Ambassador
The Political Counselor

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In conjunction with the achievements of friendly armed forces, pacification programs such as Revolutionary Development and Chieu Hoi are making inroads on the VC/NFL organization. And, less publicly, improved intelligence and the work of Census Grievance Teams, Provincial Reconnaissance Units, and the Police Special Branch are increasingly striking direct blows at the infrastructure.

All of this adds up to an encouraging level of success in "the other war." The enemy is hurting not just in his main-force military effort, but all down the line. This conclusion is supported by a wealth of evidence from recent clandestine reports and captured documents. A sampling of such materials, nearly all received within the past two months, is attached.

Attachment:
Setbacks Suffered by VC

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SELECTED EVIDENCE OF SETBACKS SUFFERED BY VC GUERRILLAS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

There is not sufficient information available to permit a comprehensive Province-by-Province, District-by-District survey of the problems faced by the VC and their reactions to the many setbacks they have suffered. The clandestine reports acquired and documents captured in the past few months do, however, provide a generous sampling extending to every major region of the country and nearly all levels of the VC organization. This attachment consists of a digest of some of the more significant reports and documents.

I. MORALE

In January, 27 VC and NVA prisoners in the National Interrogation Center were interviewed regarding their views on the ultimate outcome of the war in South Vietnam. 1/ Whereas two years ago such a group would almost certainly all have predicted a VC victory, now only 15 of the 27 did so. More significantly, fewer than half of the 13 Party members in the group expected a VC victory.

A 26 October 1966 communique from a VC regional security section complains of lack of resistance to enemy heliborne raids along Route 1. It says further that the common problem among Village Cadres and guerrillas is fear of these raids; they have become demoralized and dispirited, and their resistance plans are passive. 2/ In Quang Nam Province, a VC District-level review of 1966 operations said that of 70 military proselyting agents trained, 36 were captured or exposed and the rest lacked the courage to conduct their mission, or were simply passive in attitude. The people, it said, lacked confidence in VC administrative activities. 3/ A VC notebook captured in Operation Cedar Falls says most guerrillas of "ND" (possibly a cover name for a hamlet or village in Cu Chi District of VC Region 4) are demoralized. 4/ A quarterly report from a VC Village unit in Tay Ninh says the fear of death and war hardships caused the civilian inhabitants and even the cadres and guerrillas to turn to the enemy. The villagers "began to believe that the U.S. troops were really willing to take care of the welfare of the people." 5/

The political officer of VC Binh Duong Province unit said the cadres and people lacked determination to fight and were afraid of U.S. weapons and of protracted war. Hamlet guerrillas did not want to be assigned to village units and village guerrillas refused to fight in district units. 6/

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II. DESERTIONS AND DEFECTIONS

In Binh Thuan Province, an emergency VC District-level meeting was held in December to develop appropriate measures "to stop the day-by-day increase in defections and desertions" among demoralized VC cadres.7/ The Kien An Village Guerrilla Unit of Binh Duong Province was inactivated because its members were AWOL, had returned to their families, or surrendered to the GVN.8/

A VC Region 4 report of early 1967 says: "During the last year, there were deserters from all agencies and units, especially before and after each battle. This is an important problem." The report gives as reasons: (1) inadequate indoctrination; (2) some cadres act arbitrarily; (3) "many were demoralized by bombardments, shellings, and fierce attacks; and (4) many were influenced by Chieu Hoi policy." The report implies that those who defected to the GVN were only 14 percent of the total deserters.9/

III. LOSSES IN POPULATION UNDER VC CONTROL

A VC document dated June 1966 says: "A comparison with early 1965 shows a decrease of 1,000,000 people in the rural areas (under VC control) due to the presence of U.S. troops. This reflects poor leadership on our part." It gives the mid-1966 division of South Vietnam's population as:

"in liberated areas, 5,000,000
in enemy areas (rural), 5,000,000
in cities and towns, 4,000,000." 10/

A Phu Yen Province VC document says: "The ration of population under our control in the whole Province is one-third that of early 1966." It adds that they were to recruit 3,000 soldiers in Phu Yen, but got only 659. 11/

IV. DECREASING GUERRILLA STRENGTH

A captured VC notebook says that in some areas guerrilla warfare movements have decreased, combat aggressiveness and continuous attacks against the enemy have ceased to develop, and civilian organizations were disintegrated. 12/ A notebook from a regional-level cadre of VC Region 4 says guerrilla strength in the region declined from a high of 3,559 in 1964 to 3,114 in 1965 and 2,852 in 1966. Losses for the first 11 months of 1966 were given as 541 killed, 707 wounded, 43 captured, and 74 deserted. 13/ A document dated June 1966 says, "Guerrilla/militia dropped to 180,000...The decrease of quantity also involved a decrease in quality." 10/

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V. RECRUITING PROBLEMS

"...we have not, despite our strenuous efforts, accomplished satisfactory results with respect to the recruitment of civilian labor force, volunteer youth, and draftees." 14/ "Majority of young men in liberated areas were afraid of difficulties, enemy airstrikes, and shellings. They did not want to enlist; thus, during May 1966, all Districts (of Binh Duong Province) succeeded in recruiting only 15 young men." 15/ A Cu Chi District report says the VC in this area are (late 1966) badly demoralized; replacements cannot be found to fill the gaps left by desertion and fatalities. 16/ A report from the Military Affairs Sub-Committee of Region 4 says, "Due to the shortage of recruits for replacement ofcasualties and development of units, we encountered many difficulties..." 17/

VI. IMPACT OF PACIFICATION PROGRAMS

A late 1966 VC Region 4 Party Committee resolution says: "Pacification team operations resulted in demoralization of the population and an increase in the number of deserters and defectors."18/

There is ample evidence that this sort of thing is widespread and that the VC are placing high priority on countering Revolutionary Development, Census Grievance, Provincial Reconnaissance, and Police Special Branch activities. 19/

In one District in Phu Yen Province, an RD team succeeded in inducing the defection of an entire VC village organization. In Quang Ngai Province, on 8 and 9 February another team persuaded 23 VC to rally, including the Chief and Assistant Chief of Hiep Tho Trung Hamlet.

In Phu Yen Province, RD team popularity is such that there is a significant tendency for people to follow the teams. After one RD group started working in a hamlet there, the population grew from 30 families to about 1,200 inhabitants within a month.

During January 1967 in Binh Duong Province, a single Hamlet-level Census Grievance worker was responsible for the defection of 32 VC guerrillas, soldiers, and cadres. This took place adjacent to the VC "Iron Triangle" heartland.

The extent to which the CG activities are hurting the VC is indicated in a Bac Lieu Province VC security section report which says: "The CG system is rapidly organizing and hard working and is dealing us deadly blows at our weakest points."

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SOURCES

Clandestine reports are listed by their FVS numbers and documents by their Combined Document Exploitation Center (CDEC) numbers.

1/ [redacted] (b)(3)

2/ CDEC 01-2761-67

3/ [redacted] (b)(3)

4/ CDEC 02-1112-67

5/ CDEC 01-1598-67

6/ CDEC 02-1301-67

7/ [redacted] (b)(3)

8/ CDEC 02-1440-67

9/ CDEC 01-2393-67

10/ CDEC 01-2552-67

11/ Phu Yen Doc #012/67 (Nha Trang), translated locally

12/ CDEC 01-3465-67

13/ CDEC 01-3003-67

14/ CDEC 01-2364-67

15/ CDEC 02-1276-67

16/ CDEC 02-1249-67

17/ CDEC 01-2983-67

18/ CDEC 01-3239-67

19/ CDEC 08-1225-66, 01-3465-67, 02-1269-67

[redacted] (b)(3)

(Material on which Section VI is based is in OSA files.)

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